



Celebrating BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Portland Observer

Established in 1970

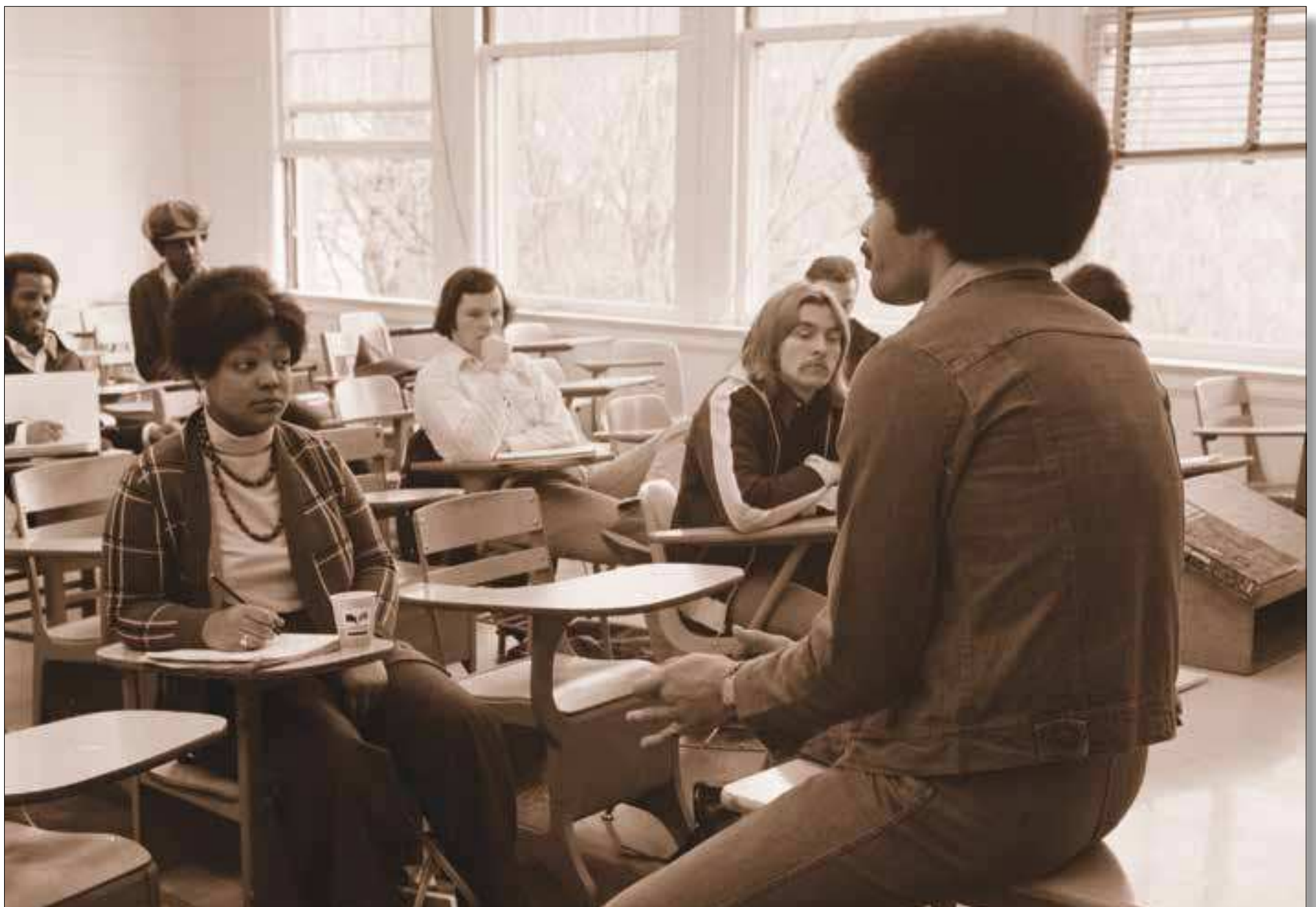
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Committed to Cultural Diversity



PHOTOS COURTESY PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Portland State University faculty member emeritus and former longtime Black Studies Chair Darrell Millner lecturing in a PSU classroom in 1975.

50 Years of Black Studies

PSU department was first in Northwest

BY DANNY PETERSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

50 years ago, Portland State became the first college in the Pacific Northwest to offer a program in black studies following the greatest decade of change for African Americans since the Civil War

Over the years, it went from being an

experimental program that was criticized by some in the academic community who questioned its legitimacy as a discipline to a full-blown--and accepted--department. After a half-century, it remains unique to the region.

"I think not only Portland State, but the whole Portland community should be proud of that," PSU professor emeritus and former department chair Darrel Millner told the Portland Observer.

While other universities in the North-

west offer courses in ethnic studies or African-American studies, PSU is the only one with a full degree-granting department with the word "black" in its name.

"At the time of our founding, 'black' was a very powerful and political term," said current department chair Shirley A. Jackson. "It was a way of throwing off the older ways of referencing people who had black skin."

An influential assortment of students and faculty pushed the idea of starting the pro-

gram in 1968 and 1969 as part of a wave of other universities around the country doing the same. Millner, who joined the department in 1975, said the effort was a product of the often student-led movements that characterized the civil rights and anti-war efforts of that era.

Portland State— which had just gained university status — approved the Black Studies program as an "experiment" on

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